

PASTORAL VISIT OF HIS BEATITUDE THE PATRIARCH OF JERUSALEM IN ZDEINDE

On Saturday, 28th May/10th June 2017, His Beatitude our Father and Patriarch of Jerusalem Theophilos, made a pastoral visit to the Greek Orthodox Arab-speaking Community of the town Zdeinde in north Israel, at the district of Acre.

This Community keeps a Holy Church in the honour of St. Patrick, Bishop of Proussa. In this Holy Church the Divine Liturgy was celebrated for the feast of the Apodosis of Pentecost, that is, the completion of eight days since the first day of celebration last Sunday, and the feast of St. Patrick which was transferred as it is normally observed on 19th May.

The Divine Liturgy was led by H.H.B. our Father and Patriarch of Jerusalem, with concelebrants the Most Reverend Metropolitan Kyriakos of Nazareth, the Most Reverend Archbishop Aristarchos of Constantina, and the Most Reverend Metropolitan Joachim of Helenoupolis, the Head of the Holy Church Fr. Ilias, Arab-speaking Priests from the neighbouring Communities and Deacon Agapios. Singing was the choir of Acre-Ptolemais, under the Patriarchal Commissioner Archimandrite Philotheos at the presence of the full congregation of St. Patrick's Parish.

To this noble congregation His Beatitude preached the divine word as follows:

"Shining brightly with the divine light, O blessed Patrick, thou didst disdain the cleverness of the eloquent; and cast into the hot springs as into a furnace without being burned,

thou didst cry: Blessed is the God of our Fathers" the hymn writer of the Church proclaims. Beloved Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

Noble Christians,

The All-Holy and Life-giving and All-powerful Spirit, the one God of the Trinity, of the same honour, essence and of the same glory to the Father and the Son, has gathered us all in this Holy Church in the name of Saint Hieromartyr Patrick, Bishop of Proussa, in order to celebrate the memory of the Patron Saint of our town Zdeinde on the one hand, and the Apodosis of Pentecost on the other.

Saint Patrick was highlighted a vessel of the enlightening grace and power of the Holy Spirit with his ordination as a Bishop as well as with his martyr's blood. Moreover, he became communicant and participant of the gospel preaching and the pastoral mission of the Holy and spirited Apostles, whose "line is gone out through all the earth, and their words to the end of the world" (Psalm 19:4) according to the psalmist.

The great Hieromartyr Patrick shone during the reign of the Roman Emperor Diocletian (284-305 A.D.). Due to his zeal for Christ, he was slandered to Proconsul Julian, who summoned him and with various means attempted to change his mind and faith and force him worship the gods of idols. To Julian's argument that the transpiration of the warm waters, as providence of the gods (of the idols), is blown out and discharged for the benefit of the people, Saint Patrick replied: it may be that the warm waters are transpired for the benefit of the people, but by His power the Lord Jesus Christ has promised two places, the one is full of goods where the righteous find rest, while the other is of darkness and fire, where the sinners will be condemned after the resurrection from the dead.

Saint Patrick draws the aforementioned witness from Prophet

Isaiah who says: "their worm shall not die, neither shall their fire be quenched; and they shall be an abhorring unto all flesh" (Isaiah 66:24). For this, St. Paul says more precisely: "But the heavens and the earth, which are now, by the same word are kept in store, reserved unto fire against the day of judgment and perdition of ungodly men" (2 Peter 3:7).

The steadfastness of Saint Patrick's faith had as a result his beheading by sword, together with his co-martyrs Akakios, Menandros, and Polyenos. In other words, our Father among the Saints Patrick, preached and confessed his faith in Christ with boldness and courage in front of persecutors and fighters against "the Kingdom in heavens which cannot be moved" as St. Paul teaches saying: "Wherefore we receiving a kingdom which cannot be moved, let us have grace, whereby we may serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear: For our God is a consuming fire" (Hebrews 12:28-29). This means that we should worship God in fear and reverence, because God is a fire that burns out and destroys every irreverent and ungodly man.

"God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth" (John 4:24). It is precisely this Divine and All-Holy Spirit that descended from heaven, on the day of Pentecost, and filled the whole house where Christ's disciples were sitting. "And there appeared unto them (the Disciples) cloven tongues like as of fire, and it sat upon each of them. And they were all filled with the Holy Ghost" (Acts 2:3-4).

Holy Pentecost is the beginning of the propagation of the enlightening and salvific preaching of the gospel by the Apostles throughout the world and of course of the Church, which appeared to the world soon after the Ascension in Heaven of our Lord Jesus Christ and the sending of the other Comforter as He promised to His disciples saying: "But when the Comforter is come, whom I will send unto you from the

Father, even the Spirit of truth, which proceedeth from the Father, he shall testify of me" (John 15:26).

And this Comforter, namely the Spirit of truth, Who is proceeded by the Father and rests in the Son, forms and conjoins the whole institution of the Church as the hymn writer says: "The Holy Spirit provideth all things; He gusheth prophesy; He perfecteth the priesthood; He hath taught wisdom to the illiterate. He hath shown forth the fishermen as theologians. He holdeth together the whole institution of the Church. Wherefore, O Comforter, one in essence and throne with the Father and the Son, glory to Thee."

This very Holy Spirit, the Spirit of our Saviour Christ, made St. Patrick a pastor, namely a perfect Bishop and Priest as well as His co-witness. In other words, these Hieromartyrs of Christ were deemed worthy of the vision of God, meaning the theory of God's glory, as their hymn writer says: "The glorious Martyrs, adorned with the vesture of the priesthood, made it more sacred with their own blood; and dancing for joy in the vision of God, they chant: Blessed is the God of our Fathers". While St. John the Evangelist says "Hereby know we that we dwell in him, and he in us, because he hath given us of his Spirit" (1 John 4:13). In other words, the fullness of the Holy Spirit dwells only in Christ, according to the true witness of St. Johh the Evangelist: "For he whom God hath sent speaketh the words of God: for God giveth not the Spirit by measure unto him. The Father loveth the Son, and hath given all things into his hand" (John 3:34-35).

The purpose of the mission given by God the Father to His Son, our Lord Jesus Christ, was to restore the communion and relationship with God, from which (communion) man had fallen out. And according to St. Cyril of Alexandria, "it is only for God's nature to save the people from devil and sin and corruption". "We therefore have (the knowledge)", Ecumenios says, "from this autopsy...and the workings of love towards

each other, that God is in us, and He has given us from His Spirit and we receive Him in communion". And that which God has given us from His Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering...meekness", this is the fruit of the Holy Spirit as St. Paul teaches (Gal. 5:22-23).

Having become participant of this fruit of the Holy Spirit, our Father among the Saints Patrick, received the crown of divine glory. Therefore let us say together with the hymn writer: "As thou now abide noetically with the Angels, O blessed Patrick, remember those who keep thy venerable memory, and entreat thy Master in thy prayers that they be rescued from perils", by the prayers of the Most blessed, our Lady Theotokos and Ever-Virgin Mary. Amen. Many happy returns."

Many of the faithful received the Holy Communion at the Koinonikon and upon dismissal His Beatitude's blessing .

At the end of the Divine Liturgy there was a reception and a meal at the new reception hall of the Parish, where His Beatitude gave an address in Arabic (the link will be posted in due course).

From Secretariat-General

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